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TAGS: PGOV PINS MOPS I2

SUBJECT: PRT MAYSAN: TOUR D'HORIZON WITH GOVERNOR'S ADVISOR

Classified By: PRT Team Leader Dan Foote for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S/REL MCFI) Summary: In a June 17 meeting with PRT Team Leader, Zaid Khalaf al-Hoshi, a close advisor to Maysan Governor Maliki, rejected rumors that the Governor had offered his resignation to PM al-Maliki. Zaid described the current atmosphere in Amarah as normal and claimed that wanted criminals and alleged insurgents had fled the province within the last week. He expressed sympathy for JAM, maintaining their presence in Maysan has been constructive. He characterized the recent replacement of the provincial police chief as regular business. End summary.

¶2. (S/REL MCFI) On July 17, Zaid Khalaf al-Hoshi traveled to PRT Maysan's offices at Tallil Air Base in Dhi Qar province, accompanied by four Maysani officials requesting funding/assistance for a number of education and agricultural projects (septel). Zaid, the provincial government's chief intermediary with the PRT and a member of Governor Maliki's inner circle, advised that he was now working in the office of VP al-Mehdi as the Representative for Maysan province. (Comment: The purported change of title has had no noticeable effect on the PRT's regular interaction with Zaid on Maysan issues, and he still appears to speak for the Governor. End comment.)

¶3. (S/REL MCFI) In a private meeting with the team leader, Zaid expressed bemusement over "rumors" that Governor Maliki had made an offer to the PM to resign. He also rejected reports that eleven PC members had been sacked, in both cases unequivocally denying the information as hearsay planted by unknown individuals with a political agenda (Note: The rumor regarding the eleven PC members may be related to the planned reconfiguration of provincial councils as anticipated by the Provincial Powers Law. End Note.) He confirmed the replacement of former provincial police chief Major General Ali Waham by Brigadier General Saad Ali Aati, adding that BG Saad had arrived in Maysan on June 15. Zaid depicted the shuffle of police commanders as ordinary business to improve security, similar to the recent replacement of Dhi Qar province's police chief, and would not offer an opinion regarding the potential effect of BG Saad's appointment, as "we do not know him."

¶4. (S/REL MCFI) Regarding the current situation in Amarah, Zaid said life was continuing as usual although residents were cautious due to the presence of Iraqi Army (IA) inside the city and Coalition Forces (CF) in the province. He cautioned that the situation should be handled differently than in Basrah, as Amarah is smaller and its alleged 'insurgents' have recently left, 'throwing away' their weapons in anticipation of Iraqi military operations. He said that the population is cooperating by reporting unauthorized weapons, but he expressed concern about the potential for human-rights violations by Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), citing media reports of ISF abuses in Basrah.

¶5. (S/REL MCFI) PRT leader said that the dissolution of JAM and the elimination of Special Group Criminals (SCGs) were key to any viable political future for Sadrists in Maysan. In response, Zaid offered a passionate speech implying his

continuing sympathy for JAM. He presented the fundamental reasons for support of the Sadrists movement as poverty, unemployment and disenfranchisement with the existing government and its political parties. He explained that the corruption and poor service delivery of the GOI and the influence of foreign powers on various Iraqi groups had alienated poor Shi'a to the point where they compared the GOI to Saddam's Ba'ath Party. To paraphrase Zaid: JAM controls thousands of disenfranchised youths who would otherwise be susceptible to foreign intelligence threats and fundamentalist insurgent recruitment by providing salaries (reported by him as between \$150 and \$200 per month). He offered the U.S.-funded Amarah surgical hospital, currently under construction and overseen by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, as a prime example of PRT - Maysan government cooperation that was creating jobs and would markedly improve lives in the province. Upon departure, Zaid expressed his hope that his next meeting with the PRT would take place soon in Amarah.

¶6. (S/REL MCFI) Comment: As Tallil is outside Maysan and over two hours distance from Amarah, Zaid's trip is testament to continued interest at the Governor's office to seeing the PRT operations in Maysan move forward. PRT will work with Embassy Baghdad to identify Zaid's ties to VP Mehdi's office.

Zaid's comments underscore the potential for further conflict between the provincial and central government over the question of JAM. End Comment.

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